4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

## CHAPTER IX.

### ALBANIAN WOMEN: THEIR FAMILY CEREMONIES.

562 184 THE domestic usages of the Albanians vary slightly, according to locality and religion, but are, in their main features, identical. And though the customs surrounding such family ceremonies as births, marriages, and deaths belong naturally more to the domain of women than of men, the latter are not less scrupulous in the fulfilment of the part in these observances which fall to their share.

156 181 Tribal and family pride being, as has been already seen, the leading feature of Albanian character, the desire of offspring, and especially male offspring, is naturally very strong with them. A childless man [554] is designated by an expression which signifies "without a root," and is looked upon as a most unfortunate [754] being. The wish, "May you be childless!" is also considered the most weighty curse that can be launched against a man by his enemy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the dearest wish of every woman's heart is consequently to be the mother of a numerous family of boys, both for the sake of the future prosperity of the tribe and for the present social consideration which their birth ensures to her.

843 When the fact that an Albanian woman is about to

## PEAKS OF SHALA

devise another way of getting at the subject. For I did want to know what Albanian women felt about being married to men they had never seen, in strange tribes, and I knew they would never tell me through masculine interpreters. Lulash would know.

[156] "But most of the sources of happiness that you mentioned are in the lives of men," I said. "Are the women happy?"

"No," said Lulash. "I do not think our women are happy." He seemed deeply troubled; there were perplexity and anxiety in his dark eyes, and he moved restlessly—which Albanians almost never do—as he sat on the floor by the heap of coals in the baking dish. They had sunk quite into gray ashes, the bleak room was very cold, filled with the ceaseless swishing sound of the rain and of the innumerable waterfalls that poured from the mountains overhead.

"Perhaps I shouldn't be asking him this? Perhaps he is married to an unhappy woman?" I asked.

"No," said Perolli. "He is not married; he is the only man in Shala who is not married."

[593] "Our women have their children; they love their children," said Lulash. "And they do not quarrel with their husbands. It almost never happens that there are ugly words in a family. But I do not think the women are happy. I do not know whether they would be happier if they chose their own husbands. Girls of the marrying age are not very wise. But I often think,

*[Tribal chief in [146] Thethis -- Analyst]

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl



his case. Since 1912 most of this administrative and penal legislation has been superseded of set purpose by European methods and laws, whereas the social content of the old mountain code has been left comparatively undisturbed, free to come into line with the ways of the West in its own time.

The community sense was fostered by every art the mountaineers knew. Each member of a household was encouraged to regard everything in it and everything its other members said and did as his own. The humblest man was encouraged to regard his village or group of villages as his personal property. If home, village or group of villages prospered, he rejoiced as if he had himself been advanced. If they were insulted or injured, he burned to avenge a personal affront. If they were disgraced by misconduct on the part of another member, he felt his own honour to be smirched. The patriotism so bred was narrow, perhaps, but it was genuine, free from egregious self-seeking, and by its emphasis on the need to keep the community's honour untarnished, a good deterrent from crime.

This close relationship between individual and community was also a curb on dictatorship. The ruling rank had always to respect the individual's property in the community's laws. They could not make any change in an existing law unless they obtained the consent of a General Assembly of their village or tribe. They could impose, but (except in the tribes which maintained fine-collectors) they could not collect fines; social pressure was necessary for that. In a very common punishment, social ostracism, they might play no more than a subordinate part. They could not pass heavy sentences like banishment or death unless a General Assembly demanded them, and if it did, they could not resist its will. In short, the elders voiced, but did not dictate, popular sentiment.

They were no privileged oligarchy either. They might sit in the seat of honour or get the lamb's head and eye at a banquet, but they had no official residences, horses or guards of honour provided for them at public expense. They lived in houses that were often meaner than those of their subordinates; they ate the same food and toiled in the same way in their fields and among their flocks. In fact, the self-government of the Albanian mountaineers went far towards being true democracy in the Anglo-American sense of that much-abused word. In its primitive way it was really government of the People, by the People, for the People. It had